

## Appropriations Committee Testimony

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Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, and Appropriations Committee members -- thank you for making time today to hear us.

My husband and I have two sons, ages 21 and 23, both of whom have autism and intellectual disabilities. I have been in front of you many times, telling their stories and asking for your help. You may be getting tired of hearing about my intellectually disabled sons as I and other families come here, year after year, to fight for a life of basic dignity for them. That request remains – but tonight, I'd like to appeal to your sense of civic responsibility at a less self-interested level.

Mahatma Ghandi once said, “The true measure of a society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.” I take inspiration from this simple moral imperative. What does that mean? What are we families actually working toward for CT?

**WE STRIVE** for a state where every person with an intellectual disability has the basic services he or she needs to lead a fulfilling life of dignity.

**WE BELIEVE** that taking care of citizens who cannot take care of themselves should be an unquestioned responsibility of all, not a burden to be ignored, or accommodated only whenever it's convenient.

**WE RECOGNIZE** that individuals with intellectual disabilities, and their family members who care for them, will have different life goals, and those goals should be respected. What's right for my child may not be what's right for yours.

**WE CHALLENGE** legislators, who make choices every day that affect people with I/DD, to become educated about this population, so that their decisions are made with understanding and empathy.

**WE ASSERT** that taking care of our loved ones with I/DD can be done better, with greater efficiency, and we strive to assist in that process so that more people can be served with our limited resources.

Does that sound like a state you want to live in? It does to me.

This is a desperate situation for our families, with resources tightening every year, waiting lists growing, and doors shutting. I heard the Governor speak last year at a Town Hall meeting, and when people asked for funding to be preserved his answer was, “Do you want your taxes raised? No? Well, in the absence of a revenue source, I have to cut. Shared sacrifice.” I argue that our population has sacrificed enough. This is a matter of setting priorities – and reminding ourselves that ***caring for the disabled is a core function of government***. We can argue what government should and shouldn’t be doing – and we can debate where that line of governmental responsibility should be drawn, but if taking care of those who can’t take care of themselves isn’t a core function of government, what is? Please join us in supporting a life of simple dignity for our most vulnerable citizens. Please protect DDS’s funding, and allow them to help all of our children.